

**JOINT RESOLUTION HONORING THE  
BATTLESHIP USS UTAH ON ITS 100TH  
ANNIVERSARY**

2009 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

**Chief Sponsor: Julie Fisher**

Senate Sponsor: Peter C. Knudson

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**LONG TITLE**

**General Description:**

This joint resolution of the Legislature honors the battleship USS Utah on its 100th Anniversary and those who served on her.

**Highlighted Provisions:**

This resolution:

► honors the battleship USS Utah on the 100th anniversary of her construction and service and all the sailors and marines who served on her.

**Special Clauses:**

None

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*Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

WHEREAS, the USS Utah was first announced to the citizens of the state in an address given at the Salt Lake Tabernacle by President Theodore Roosevelt on May 29, 1903;

WHEREAS, the United States Congress appropriated funds to construct the battleship USS Utah in 1908;

WHEREAS, the contract to construct the USS Utah, also known as BB 31, was awarded by the navy to the New York Ship Building Company in November 1908, and construction began March 9, 1909;



28 WHEREAS, the USS Utah was launched on December 23, 1909;

29 WHEREAS, in attendance at that event was Utah Governor William Spry, his daughter  
30 Mary Alice Spry, who christened the ship, and several hundred distinguished Utah citizens who  
31 took special trains from Salt Lake City to New York for the ceremony;

32 WHEREAS, in 1910, Governor Spry convened and commissioned a Silver Service  
33 Commission, chaired by Daniel C. Jackling of Utah Copper fame, to design and provide the  
34 ship on its commissioning with a fitting sterling silver service to be used by its officers and  
35 guests;

36 WHEREAS, Governor Spry and the Commission enlisted the support of Utah's school  
37 children to assist in the purchase of the service;

38 WHEREAS, each child was asked to donate up to but not more than ten cents, and  
39 approximately 22,000 students donated to the cause;

40 WHEREAS, the students contributed over \$2,277 toward the service, and the 1911  
41 Legislature appropriated the remaining funds to cover the \$10,000 cost;

42 WHEREAS, each student donor was given a small, engraved card of appreciation and  
43 the student's name was placed in a book of participants, which is now held in the state archives;

44 WHEREAS, the USS Utah was commissioned on August 31, 1911, as the newest  
45 member of the U.S. fleet;

46 WHEREAS, at the time, the USS Utah was the largest and most powerful ship in the  
47 world;

48 WHEREAS, Governor Spry, Senators Reed Smoot and George Sutherland, and many  
49 other dignitaries including George Dewey, Admiral of the Navy, attended the Silver Service  
50 presentation on November 6, 1911;

51 WHEREAS, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir performed a special reworded rendition of  
52 the state song, Utah We Love Thee, honoring the new ship;

53 WHEREAS, the USS Utah and the silver service, along with a newly designed state  
54 flag, were presented to William S. Benson, the ship's first captain;

55 WHEREAS, from that ceremony the state provided the ship with a state flag and a  
56 United States flag to fly on its fantail;

57 WHEREAS, since Utah did not have an official flag, the Governor asked the Adjutant  
58 General to contact the Horstmann Company of Philadelphia to design a flag based on the state

59 seal;

60 WHEREAS, the design was approved, the flag was made, and in 1911 and 1913 the  
61 Legislature passed legislation to designate the state flag and establish its design;

62 WHEREAS, the USS Utah began its trials and then went to sea as the fleet's new  
63 flagship;

64 WHEREAS, in 1914 three members of the crew of the USS Utah were awarded the  
65 Congressional Medal of Honor for their efforts that were above and beyond the call of duty  
66 while the ship was assigned duty in Mexico;

67 WHEREAS, at the beginning of World War I, the USS Utah was assigned to Bantry  
68 Bay, Ireland to protect the North Sea and to help keep German warships bottled up in their  
69 harbors;

70 WHEREAS, at the end of World War I, the USS Utah escorted the USS Washington as  
71 it carried President Woodrow Wilson to England and France to participate in the signing of the  
72 peace treaty;

73 WHEREAS, on returning to the United States, the USS Utah provided coastal  
74 protection and fulfilled the duty of showing the flag throughout the world;

75 WHEREAS, in 1928, the USS Utah was selected to take President-elect and Mrs.  
76 Hoover on an extended tour of South America;

77 WHEREAS, at the end of the voyage, President Hoover invited the ship's crew to the  
78 White House, where he and Mrs. Hoover entertained the crew for the afternoon;

79 WHEREAS, in July 1931, after 20 years of service, the USS Utah was designated as  
80 AG 16, an auxiliary ship of the navy, after a world armament conference;

81 WHEREAS, the USS Utah was turned into a training and target ship for new bombers  
82 of the Navy and Army Air Corp and coastal guns; and, as the first robot-controlled ship, she had  
83 the most innovative technology of the time put aboard her;

84 WHEREAS, in March 1941, she was reassigned from California to Pearl Harbor,  
85 Hawaii, her new home port;

86 WHEREAS, as the first ship attacked by the Japanese on the morning of Sunday,  
87 December 7th, 1941, the USS Utah sustained hits from several bombs and two torpedoes  
88 before rolling over on her side and sinking within 12 minutes;

89 WHEREAS, 58 men paid the ultimate price on the USS Utah that day;

90 WHEREAS, 461 men on the USS Utah survived the surprise attack and sinking;  
91 WHEREAS, the USS Utah is still at her berth under water just like her sister ship the  
92 USS Arizona;

93 WHEREAS, in 1969, a fitting memorial was established by an act of Congress  
94 sponsored by Senator Frank Moss;

95 WHEREAS, all of the members of the crew that day did what they could to save their  
96 ship, their crew mates, and themselves, and then fought the enemy;

97 WHEREAS, one of the sailors, Chief Peter Tomich, remained at his post trying to keep  
98 the ship alive and functioning after getting his men out;

99 WHEREAS, for his actions, Tomich received the Congressional Medal of Honor, and  
100 as Tomich had no living relatives, the state of Utah, by statute, formally adopted him;

101 WHEREAS, in 1946, the Congressional Medal of Honor was presented to Governor  
102 Herbert Maw, who acted as a representative of the people of the state as Tomich's family at a  
103 ceremony held in Utah Capitol's Rotunda;

104 WHEREAS, the Capitol Preservation Board has decided to honor the USS Utah and its  
105 crew on its 100th anniversary by producing an exhibit in the Capitol Building including  
106 artifacts, photos, and stories of the USS Utah and its crew; and

107 WHEREAS, the exhibit is being sponsored by Ancestry.com, a part of the Generations  
108 Network of Provo, Utah, in cooperation with the USS Utah Association, William Hughes,  
109 Judith McConkie, Curator of the Utah State Capitol, the Utah State Archives, the Utah State  
110 Historical Society, the Fort Douglas Military Museum, Ephraim Dickson III, Curator, and  
111 private citizens and collectors, Carl Timmerman and Ronald Fox:

112 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislature of the state of Utah  
113 honors the USS Utah, a valiant ship, and all who served on her and the many who gave their  
114 last measure of devotion to their country aboard her on December 7, 1941.

115 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be sent to each surviving  
116 member of the USS Utah's crew, the USS Utah Association, the Department of the Navy, the  
117 National Park Service, the Pearl Harbor Memorial, the Utah State Historical Society, the Utah  
118 Department of Veteran's Affairs, the Capitol Preservation Board, Ancestry.com, Utah State  
119 Archives, Carl Timmerman, Ronald Fox, the Adjutant General of the Utah National Guard, and  
120 the Fort Douglas Military Museum.

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**Legislative Review Note**  
**as of 2-27-09 2:25 PM**

**Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel**

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**Fiscal Note****H.J.R. 28 - Joint Resolution Honoring the Battleship Uss Utah on its 100th Anniversary**

2009 General Session

State of Utah

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**State Impact**

Enactment of this resolution will not require additional appropriations.

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**Individual, Business and/or Local Impact**

Enactment of this bill likely will not result in direct, measurable costs and/or benefits for individuals, businesses, or local governments.

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